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Ref: OIAD-6150

Tēnā koe Hayden

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 2 March 2026, in which you asked for:

The annual cost to DOC of pest animal control for each of the following species, for each of the past 5 financial years: deer, pigs, goats, tahr, chamois, wallaby, and possums. DOC's estimate of the number of pest animals (by species) removed by recreational hunters annually, and any assessment of the monetary value of this pest control contribution.

Any analysis by DOC of whether enabling the commercial sale of recreationally hunted pest animal meat would increase recreational hunting effort and thereby reduce pest animal populations.

Any analysis of whether the current prohibition on private sale of recreationally hunted wild game meat acts as a disincentive to recreational hunting effort.

Any correspondence, submissions, or briefings between DOC and MPI regarding the commercialisation or regulated sale of recreationally hunted wild game meat.

Any assessment by DOC of the TB risk from wild deer and wild pigs, by region — specifically, whether the TB-free status of Southland's wild deer population supports a differentiated regulatory approach to wild game meat sale.

Recreational hunters remove significant numbers of pest animals annually at no cost to the Crown. Enabling a regulated pathway for local sale of pest animal meat would increase the economic incentive for hunting, potentially reducing the Crown's direct pest control expenditure. I am establishing whether DOC has assessed this co-benefit.

If any information is to be withheld, please specify the grounds under the OIA for each withheld item.

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

On 6 March 2026 we contacted you to clarify the timeframe applicable to your requests. You responded that it was five years for all of your requests. We also asked you to clarify whether you were interested specifically in information held by DOC, rather than the public service as a whole. We noted that if you were interested in information beyond that which is held by DOC that we would need to partially transfer your request to other agencies.

We did not receive a response in regard to this query, and we have therefore, based on the wording of your requests and the fact that you have a similar request with the Ministry for Primary Industries, interpreted your request as seeking information on undertakings by DOC only. We

have however noted where information is not held, or activities are not undertaken by DOC where you might like to direct further requests.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. *The annual cost to DOC of pest animal control for each of the following species, for each of the past 5 financial years: deer, pigs, goats, tahr, chamois, wallaby, and possums.*

You requested the annual cost to DOC of control for deer, pigs, goats, tahr, chamois, wallaby, and possums for each of the past five financial years.

DOC does not hold complete or nationally consistent records of wild animal management expenditure by species. Many management operations are designed with a primary target species in mind, such as deer or goats, but other managed species encountered during the course of an operation may also be controlled where practical. Costs are generally recorded at an operation or programme level, rather than apportioned to each species controlled during the operation. As a result, in many cases it is not possible to reliably separate expenditure by species.

Exceptions exist where a species is managed through a dedicated programme — for example, Himalayan tahr are managed under the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993 which is implemented through dedicated annual Tahr Control Operational Plans.

We have provided the core information DOC holds for ongoing business-as-usual wild animal management. Providing full, nationally consistent, species-specific expenditure beyond this, including region-specific, time-limited or standalone projects, would require substantial manual compilation from multiple systems and regions. This would involve significant research and collation and is therefore refused under section 18(f) of the Official Information Act 1982.

The listed expenditure provided for 2025-2026 includes the forecasted total expenditure expected for this financial year.

Deer, Goats, Chamois, and Pigs

Most wild animal management expenditure over the past five years has been directed toward deer and goat management.

Pig and chamois management is undertaken where practical and is generally delivered as part of broader wild animal management programmes, rather than as a standalone activity. For this reason, DOC does not hold national, species-specific expenditure data for pig or chamois management for the past five financial years. This part of your request must therefore be refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, which applies where the requested information does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Financial Year	Expenditure (\$) for operations primarily managing deer	Expenditure (\$) for operations primarily managing goats
2021-2022	454,373	5,851,341
2022-2023	687,022	5,297,828
2023-2024	668,846	5,704,663
2024-2025	529,027	4,958,287
2025-2026	6,278,523 combined deer and goats operations	

DOC has undertaken additional wild animal management in areas where wild animals, particularly pigs and goats, may contribute to the spread of kauri dieback disease.

Financial Year	Expenditure (\$) for wild animal management in kauri areas
2021-2022	400,000
2022-2023	400,000
2023-2024	400,000
2024-2025	400,000
2025-2026	403,000

As it is a significant standalone project - we have separated the deer control DOC has underway, in partnership with local iwi/hapū, Northland Regional Council, the deer farming industry, and landowners, to deliver the Wild Deer Free Te Tai Tokerau programme, an eradication strategy for Northland. This programme was established in the 2022/2023 financial year. Annual fluctuations in expenditure are due to differences in each eradication operation, such the size of the control area, terrain, and herd size.

Financial Year	Expenditure (\$) for wild animal management in Northland
2021-2022	N/A
2022-2023	260,000
2023-2024	1,295,735
2024-2025	869,980
2025-2026	736,982

Tahr

Per above, Tahr are managed under the Himalayan Thar Control Plan 1993 which is implemented through dedicated annual Tahr Control Operational Plans. These plans set out how tahr numbers will be managed within each Tahr Management Unit, using a mix of DOC-led control and recreational hunting.

The Tahr Plan Implementation Liaison Group (TPILG) provides advice on the development and implementation of the TCOPs and includes representation from recreational hunting interests. As part of this approach, DOC has been progressing work to increase the contribution of recreational hunters in certain units, including trialling hunter-led management where appropriate and consistent with the objectives of the Control Plan.

Further information on Tahr Control Operational Plans, including current and past plans, is publicly available on the DOC website: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/hunting/what-to-hunt/tahr/tahr-control-operations/>

Financial Year	Expenditure (\$) for tahr
2021-2022	830,000
2022-2023	720,000
2023-2024	850,000
2024-2025	1,100,000
2025-2026	802,000

Wallaby

DOC does not incur operational costs for wallaby control. DOC's involvement is limited to in-kind participation in the Tipu Mātoro National Wallaby Eradication Programme. Accordingly, DOC holds no species-specific operational expenditure for wallaby control for the period requested and your request must be refused under section 18(e) of the OIA.

We understand that you have contacted the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), who lead the national wallaby control programme, with a similar request. You may also wish to contact the relevant regional councils (Bay of Plenty, Environment Canterbury, Otago, Waikato, and Auckland), which lead deliver operational wallaby control.

Possums

Possums are primarily managed under DOC's National Predator Control Programme. This work simultaneously controls possums, rats and stoats. The lower expenditure in 2021/2022 was due to Covid-19 restrictions that halted planned field work.

Financial Year	Expenditure (\$) for possums
2021-2022	8,841,000
2022-2023	19,798,000
2023-2024	25,500,000
2024-2025	25,209,000
2025-2026	26,113,000

2. *DOC's estimate of the number of pest animals (by species) removed by recreational hunters annually, and any assessment of the monetary value of this pest control contribution.*

DOC does not hold an estimate of the number of wild animals removed annually by recreational hunters, as they are not required to provide information to DOC on this. DOC has not undertaken any assessment of the monetary value of this contribution and your request must be refused under section 18(e) of the OIA.

You may wish to contact the New Zealand Game Animal Council, which has some statutory functions relating to hunting and may hold information relevant to your request.

3. *Any analysis by DOC of whether enabling the commercial sale of recreationally hunted pest animal meat would increase recreational hunting effort and thereby reduce pest animal populations.*

With regards to your questions addressed in points 3-7, DOC does not regulate the commercial sale of wild animal meat. These functions sit with the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) under food safety and animal products legislation.

DOC's role relates to managing wild animals on public conservation land. This includes granting concessions for commercial Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO). It does not include assessing commercial pathways or economic incentives for the sale of meat from recreationally hunted animals, nor evaluating whether such commercial settings would influence recreational hunting effort or associated population outcomes. Your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the OIA.

4. *Any analysis of whether the current prohibition on private sale of recreationally hunted wild game meat acts as a disincentive to recreational hunting effort.*

DOC holds no analysis on whether the current prohibition on private sale of recreationally hunted wild animal meat affects recreational hunting effort. Your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the OIA. Per above, responsibility for policy and regulation relating to the sale of wild animal meat sits with the Ministry for Primary Industries.

5. *Any correspondence, submissions, or briefings between DOC and MPI regarding the commercialisation or regulated sale of recreationally hunted wild game meat.*

DOC holds no correspondence, submissions, or briefings with MPI regarding the commercialisation or regulated sale of recreationally hunted wild game meat. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the OIA.

6. *Any assessment by DOC of the TB risk from wild deer and wild pigs, by region — specifically, whether the TB-free status of Southland's wild deer population supports a differentiated regulatory approach to wild game meat sale.*

DOC has not undertaken any assessment of the tuberculosis (TB) risk from wild deer or wild pigs by region. DOC has also not analysed whether the TB-free status of Southland's wild deer population would support a differentiated regulatory approach to the sale of wild animal meat. This part of your request is therefore refused under section 18(e) of the OIA.

Management of TB in New Zealand's livestock and wildlife populations is the responsibility of OSPRI, through delivery of the National Pest Management Plan for bovine TB. Regulation of wild animal meat in relation to biosecurity and food safety — including any implications of regional TB status — is administered by MPI.

As these matters sit outside DOC's statutory responsibilities, you may wish to contact OSPRI and MPI for any information they may hold related to your request.

7. *Recreational hunters remove significant numbers of pest animals annually at no cost to the Crown. Enabling a regulated pathway for local sale of pest animal meat would increase the economic incentive for hunting, potentially reducing the Crown's direct pest control expenditure. I am establishing whether DOC has assessed this co-benefit.*

DOC has not assessed the co-benefit you describe and must refuse your request under section 18(e) of the OIA. You may wish to direct your query to MPI as the responsible agency.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on DOC's website.

Nāku noa, nā



Ben Reddiex
Director Biodiversity National Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai